

THE PROBLEM OF CLOTHES.

In opening our columns to this subject, and inviting opinions on it, the Editor invites serious consideration of a serious subject, not "fashions and frivolities." Clothes are to some of us a pleasure, to others only a painful duty, but as either they swallow a proportion of our income. We have to bear two or three things in mind when speaking of our own circumstances. We mostly live in houses where the standard of dressing is high and taste is good. Also we mostly have to give our clothes far harder wear than those who have ample time to mend and change them. The problem is becoming acute in these days owing to the multitudinous occupations of modern life. Suppose you motor, you cycle, you walk—the heavy coat needed for No. 1 is ungainly on a cycle, and too heavy for walking—hence two coats. Suppose you play hockey, you cycle, and live a semi-town life—three skirts—for a regulation hockey skirt is too full and too short to look well cycling. And so on *ad infinitum*. The following article proposes to squeeze the necessities of life into £20 a year. I know those who do it are generally home dwellers, with credit at their nearest large costumiers, and their bills are mostly half a quarter's income in advance of them—a miserable state of affairs. Good advice at least is cheap, therefore let us give it to one another.

DRESS ON £20 A YEAR.

I once found a book entitled "How to dress on £10 a year," and seized on it with avidity, only to find on perusing it that one was apparently expected to pay calls in a macintosh and sailor hat, and that the sum allowed yearly for one's veils and boots amounted to 3s. After that I left off reading it, but I have often thought how useful it would

be for girls with a very limited allowance if there were some means of guiding them in the spending of their quarterly cheques!

Of course, for a girl living at home, with plenty of time on her hands, and possibly a machine in the house, £20 a year is a comfortable dress allowance; but there are an increasing number of women now-a-days who either cannot sew, or have no time, so busy is their life, to fashion their own garments, and these busy women are just the ones who are most in the public eye, and, consequently, have the most need to be consistently fresh and neat.

In these days of multitudinous and dainty details, however, £20 is by no means a large sum to have at command for one's wardrobe, and it requires some careful thinking over to make both ends meet. There are three various sorts of girls—the town girl, the provincial girl, and the country, or rather, the county girl.

The town girl with an allowance of £20 has by far the hardest task of the three, and she must make up her mind at once that she cannot follow fashion in all its varied changes. The provincial girl is a hybrid; she partakes of the nature of both town and country, and generally manages to make an awful hash of both styles of clothing, with dire effect. The country girl has the best of it. She can be plain and neat by day, and at night only, blossom out into a splendour which by day is highly and entirely unnecessary.

I am going in this article to show by a few modest hints *how* the precious £20 can be best spent.

I begin at the bottom—that is, *boots*. No woman who respects herself, or who has the very faintest desire of being thought smart or even "well-groomed," will neglect her boots. Common or neglected boots are a sure sign of a cast-a-way in clothes! The country girl should allow some £5 a year for her boot bill—two pairs of shoes at 15/6, a pair of strong boots 17/6, a pair of smart patent or glaze evening shoes at 10/6, and a pair of velvet shoes 4/11—*should* do her for the year. Of course she will have trees, and see that her shoes go on them, religiously, as soon as they come off her feet, *and before they are cold*. Trees are not an extravagance—they are a necessity—and prolong the life and the appearance of her boots enormously.

Of underwear there is not much to say. The girl with

limited means should always go in for "frills," not lace edgings—frilled nightgowns, well got up, will always look dainty and fresh, and are cheaper, both in the initial expense, and also in the time that they wear, than those with lace edgings. Dainty blue, or any other coloured cotton petticoats can be bought for very little, and last clean longer than white ones, and for 8/11, one good "silk Morette" petticoat can be got, which will last her for best throughout the year.

Hats are a difficulty. A girl who is quick at grasping ideas can always trim her own hats: neat sewing is not required here; but let her be warned, don't trim your hats with *old materials*. However plain they may be, and plain hats, if *well done*, are *very smart*, they will look far and away better than a hat trimmed more elaborately, with materials or flowers which have done duty before. Three hats a year must suffice for the £20 girl, with perhaps a leather motor cap for very vile weather. These three hats, if trimmed by herself (and it is quite a mistake to think that home-trimmed hats always give themselves away), ought not to cost her more than 30/- the three, nor can she afford more out of her income.

Veils and gloves can be bought for very little. It remains with the individual girl how long they *last*, but if she will take the trouble to smooth out her veils, and put them in a sachet after use, she will find that they last crisp far longer than a veil which never comes off the hat with which it is worn, or remains a tumbled lump in a corner of a drawer until it is next wanted. And the same remark applies to all ribbons and cravats.

Evening dresses are a rather serious item. If evening dress is worn every evening, it is a very serious item in one's yearly expenditure.

A black silk dress of some soft, thin silk, costing about £3 3s. od., and a white or coloured frock of chepe-de-chine or oriental satin, costing about £3 10s. od., will be all that can possibly be afforded, but she can have two low thin silk and chiffon evening blouses, which can be made quite inexpensively by a dressmaker, or a clever maid, to help her out.

The £20 girl must make up her mind to coats and skirts. They are her stand by, and she cannot do without them.

She should buy at sale time, when for 50s. she can get really good models at almost any of the larger shops, and of these during the year she can have two. The next year they ought to be quite good enough for "scrub" frocks, and will save her new ones. Grey, black, or dark blue wear the longest; green fades, and brown shows spots of every kind very distinctly.

Two cotton frocks, made by a good dressmaker, should cost her about £1 15s. od. each, if so much, and will be invaluable for summer wear; and she should have half a dozen cotton shirts, made very plainly, but with many tucks. These, with three flannelette, and one silk skirt for winter, ought to be quite enough for her during the year. £2 ought to cover the cost of all these, especially if she is clever, and can go about and pick up the exact thing she likes when she sees it and it is within her means.

Remember the £20 girl can have no "best frocks." Her aim must be to be always neat, always clean, and always "well-cut." And to gain this effect it is necessary that her style of dress must be *plain*. It is impossible on such an allowance to attempt the more elaborate styles of clothing which are so much in vogue, and so eminently fascinating. Nothing runs away with money so much as dainty details, and it is in these beguiling "extras" that one has to learn to deny oneself. They so soon lose their freshness, and nothing looks more ill-dressed than some elaborate confection which shows signs of wear, and is crumpled and soiled.

Be plain, be smart, in the way you put your clothes on, and always carry yourself as if you knew there was no other woman in the room whose clothes were a patch upon yours! and then your £20 will carry you through the year "on the top" of everything.